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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the relationships among education, meritocracy, and social justice in Sweden. The study identifies reasons for restricted access to grammar schools that, at certain times, have dominated the Swedish discourse concerning the relationship between education and social justice. Social justice and the legitimacy of power during the 19th century are discussed. A description is given to explain how a school system was constructed according to principles which were regarded as impartial, even though it was disadvantageous for the vast majority of the people. The second part of the paper discusses the following questions: (1) How did the teachers define a true or "normal" grammar school student? (2) What social groups were thereby excluded explicitly or implicitly? and (3) What meanings of social justice were embedded in the teachers' discourse? (LB)

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Accessible to each and everyone?
Meritocracy and Social Justice in Swedish Education 1800-1960

Paper presented at the AERA conference, San Diego, April, 1998

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the relation between education, meritocracy and social justice in Sweden, and the underlying "regimes of truths" used to legitimize the restricted access to grammar schools, which were the main road to universities and prestigious professions. In the 19th century a school system was constructed according to principles that were regarded as just, even though they were to the disadvantage of the vast majority of the people. Women were, for example, a priori excluded from grammar schools. In the early 20th century new "truths" about the relation between education and social justice were articulated, and the Education Act of 1927 indicates that the power relations structuring the educational field had shifted. In order to understand the discursive shifts I have combined Foucault's archeological and genealogical method with Pierre Bourdieu's theories of capital and field.

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Accessible to each and everyone? Meritocracy and social justice in Swedish education 1800-1960[1]

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The title of this symposium is inspired by Michel Foucault's work, and so is also my paper. One aim of his archeological and genealogical method is to reveal "regimes of truth."[2] What is it, for example, that makes some statement be known as true, and what social and economical processes make it possible to articulate certain truths while others are simply impossible to speak? His basic thought is that knowledge and power are the two sides of the same coin: it takes power to establish and claim true statements, at the same time as power is operating in and by the discourses where truths are articulated.[3]

I am not systematically applying Foucault's methods for discourse analysis, but my paper focuses on questions central for an Foucauldian approach. My aim is to look behind the truths that at certain times have dominated the Swedish discourse about the relation between education and social justice. For this purpose I will, in the first part of the paper, go back to the 19th century when such a relation for the first time in history was established on a large scale. I will briefly describe how a school system was constructed according to principles which were regarded as just, even if they were to the disadvantage of the vast majority of the people. We will also see how new "truths" about the relation between education and social justice were articulated. The aim of the Education Act of 1927 was to promote social justice in and by means of education by making the grammar schools less exclusive. The proportion of students who proceeded to grammar schools gradually increased, and consequently the meaning of the category grammar school student changed. In the second part of my paper I will examine those changing meanings in the discourse of grammar school teachers. How did the teachers define a true or (normal) grammar school student? What social groups were thereby excluded explicitly or implicitly? What meanings of social justice were embedded in the teachers' discourse?

Social justice and the legitimacy of power

Most societies are built on social hierarchies which in their turn are based on an unequal distribution of economical or cultural resources, privileges and status. This unequal distribution can of course be upheld by violence, but more usually those who benefit from it try to make it appear as legitimate - as just. In the premodern Swedish aristocratic society where privileges were connected to birth, it was referred to a divine justice, to the reason of God. However, in the 19th century the divine justice began to be questioned. Rising bourgeois groups started to claim their part of the glory and the

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[1]Paper presented at the symposium The Archeology of Social Justice, AERA annual conference, San Diego, 1998. The paper is based on research carried out for a project financed by the Swedish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

[2]For the aim of this paper it is not necessary to elaborate more deeply the relation between archeology and genealogy even though this is a contested issue among many philosophers and interpreters of Foucault. Cf Dean, (1994).

[3]Foucault, Michel. *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Foucault, Michel (1980). *Power Knowledge:*

power. With slogans like *To each and everyone according to his merit*, they attacked the aristocratic supremacy. The road to top positions in society should in principle be open for everyone, and those who reached the top should consequently be the most competent. According to such a meritocratic ideology, those who were privileged would have earned their privileges. The education system came to play an important role in this meritocracy; school marks were regarded as objective measures of personal merit and competence, and high marks and diplomas could qualify for top positions.[4]

Those who articulated these meritocratic ideas were obviously solidly convinced of their own ability. Their self awareness had also a stable basis, because it was supported by the economic development; they all belonged to the vanguard of capitalism in Sweden. The following statement was made in the Swedish parliament in the 1850s:

> *Do you not see that there is no longer a beggar standing at the door, pleased with having a meagre bone thrown at his feet, but that the master of recent times, who is clothing and feeding all of us, has himself taken his seat on the school bench --- Earlier no other knowledge was acknowledged than the one which had grown out of classical soil. Modern times, on the contrary, acknowledges nothing else than what is rooted in positive and real ground.*[5]

The master of recent times in this quote is a metaphor for capitalism, which on its triumphal procession over Europe had reached also Sweden. The statement also expressed another goal that united various bourgeois groups. The issue at stake was not only to destroy the aristocratic supremacy but also the hegemony of Latin within higher education.

Capitalistic development started late in Sweden, but thereafter the pace accelerated. In a few decades Sweden was transformed from a basically agrarian country to a prominent industrialized nation. New times also required new moral and vocational qualifications - a new type of citizen had to be constructed. Sweden had to keep up with the competition on the international market, and it became the duty of the state to mobilize all citizens in that struggle. Education was one means for attaining this goal, and with the state apparatus as a platform a group of bourgeois men started to systematically build a modern school system. Old schools and curricula was reformed; for example, in grammar school more time were allocated for sciences and modern language to the expense of Latin and Greek. Advanced schools for the education of engineers, veterinarians, agronomists, etc were established. Investment in education was instrumental investments in individuals which later would be cashed in by the state, the nation, but first and foremost bourgeois groups would be the beneficiaries.[6]

Thus, it is possible to distinguish two separate but related themes in the discourse of education, both generated out of the fundamental discursive formation; the bourgeois social order is the natural order of things. The first theme concerned the relation between education, social justice and meritocracy. A natural order must be just, and the truly meritocratic school system guranteed that this was also the case. The second theme concerned social efficiency: the educational system distributed students to appropriate positions in society according to the principle, *right person in right place*. Therefore there were only winners and no loosers in this system since everyone contributed to the common good. These themes proved to be very persistent in educational discourses,

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[4] Johansson, U (1994) Historien om likvärdighet i svensk skola, pp. 32-33.

[5] J M Agardh, Records of the Swedish Parliament, the clergy, 1853/54, no 7, p 306-307.

[6] Johansson, Ulla & Florin, Christina (1994). Young Men in Old Institutions. Culture, Class and Gender in Swedish Grammar Schools - A Comparative Perspective, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, pp. 192-196.

even if the truths which were referred to in order to uphold the image of a socially just and efficient school system later on changed.

As mentioned above, many advanced schools were established in the 19th century. But during this period a system for mass education was also constructed. The first elementary school act was passed in 1842. It is true that the Act was an indication only of very modest ambitions of the state to educate and foster the people. However, at the end of the century elementary schooling had expanded and improved. Consequently an increasing proportion of the Swedish youth spent an increasing part of their life in elementary schools all around the country.[7]

In his investigation of the birth of the modern prison, Foucault points to the fact that schools, like prisons, were important institutions for disciplining and controlling the people.[8] In schools the new individual was to be constructed, a disciplined person who voluntarily submitted him- or herself to the order of things. According to their ranking and progress, students were allocated to different types of schools and classrooms within the schools. Examinations, classifications, rewards and remedial treatments were normalising practices, which in their turn constructed patterns of normality. In these processes the individuals were objectified. But as far as they accepted the classification of themselves, their behaviours, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and their very identities were also constructed.[9] This also meant that the normalising practices and normal patterns were differentiated. One normality was established in, for example, grammar school, and quite another one in elementary school.[10]

To summarize so far. The educational system played a key role for establishing and legitimating a bourgeois hierarchical order. The school system was also employed by the new industrialised nation for the competition on the international market. But education was also a means of making everyone realize their proper place in the social division of labour. Most people should learn to accept a subordinate position, while a few persons would become more strongly convinced that they deserved better, a larger amount of life goods, than others.

In the next section I will describe the nucleus of the school system that provided a classification of people into subordinated and superior subjects.

Education, class and gender

The 19th-century school system was hierarchical. (Cf figure 1.) One can distinguish three different levels, corresponding to three social classes or three levels of the vertical division of labour. The elementary school system with the elementary school as the basic unit would educate for subordinate positions in society. The lower secondary school prepared its students for intermediate positions in society. But unlike most of the supplementary courses building on the elementary school, the lower secondary school was connected with the upper secondary grammar school and thus with higher education. As figure 1 shows, the grammar school had become the main road not only to the universities but also to a number of different colleges since a formal requirement for university or college studies was that the student had passed the final grammar school exam, the matriculation. The universities and the colleges were the third and last stepping stones to influential positions in the civil

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[7] Florin, Christina & Johansson, Ulla (1997). Three Cultures, Three Stories, p. 44.
[8] Foucault, Michel (1982). *Discipline and Punishment*, pp. 135-230.
[9] See also Marshall, James (1995). Michel Foucault: Governmentality and Liberal Education, p. 26-27.

[10] Florin & Johansson, Three Cultures, Three Stories.

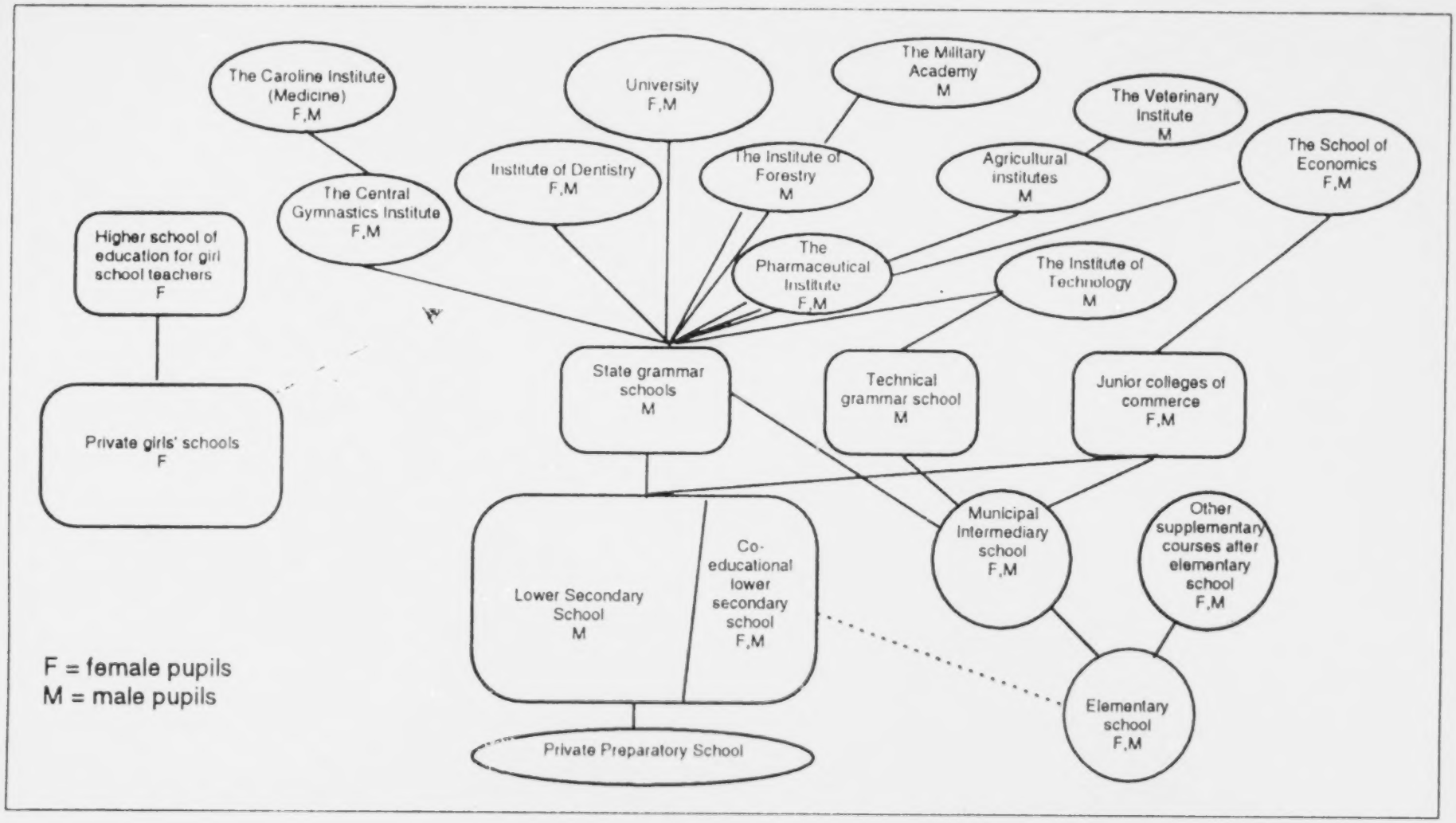
The Caroline Institute (Medicine) F,M
University F,M
The Military Academy M
The Veterinary Institute M
The School of Economics F,M
Institute of Dentistry F,M
The Institute of Forestry M
Agricultural institutes M
The Central Gymnastics Institute F,M
Higher school of education for girl school teachers F
The Pharmaceutical Institute F,M
The Institute of Technology M
State grammar schools M
Technical grammar school M
Junior colleges of commerce F,M
Private girls' schools F
Municipal intermediary school F,M
Other supplementary courses after elementary school F,M
Lower Secondary School M
Co-educational lower secondary school F,M
Elementary school F,M
Private Preparatory School
F = female pupils
M = male pupils

Figure 1. The Education System in Sweden Around 1914

Source: Ch. Florin, U. Johansson, *„Där de härliga lagrarna gro..." Kultur, klass och kön...*, Stockholm 1993, p. 89.

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service as well as the world of industrial management, banking and business.

The figure also shows that the system was gender segregated, but it is noteworthy that gender segregation was more obvious at the secondary school level. The upper secondary grammar school was entirely a male world. Paradoxically higher education was not altogether male-dominated, since some programmes allowed women students. However, it was not easy for a woman to qualify for university studies. She had either to be privately coached and examined as an external candidate at a grammar school or attend one of the few private girls' schools which were authorized to examine their students and confer the necessary matriculation diploma. The parents of the girls had to pay out of their own pockets for their daughters' secondary education, whereas the boys could get such an education practically free of charge in the state funded secondary grammar schools.[11]

The basic structure of the education system strikes a discordant note with the meritocratic idea according to which the road to the top positions of society should be open for each and everyone. And as this road, with respect to education, passed through the grammar school, there is reason to examine which processes and discursive rules made it possible to keep them intact for a small group of young men. Here the opinion that grammar school in practice really was open for everyone played an important part. In the 1820s, for example, a state commission stated that the teaching had always been free and should remain so in order to "give the cottager's son an opportunity to ascend to the most prestigious state positions by his own efforts, for the sake of glory and benefit of the nation".[12] To be true there were some local fees for firewood, light and the school library, but a poor and talented boy could get an exemption from the fees.

However, it should be noted that the concern was directed only to the cottager's son, not to his daughter or to any other girls. The meritocracy was by definition a male enterprise, and there was obviously no need for justifying this state of affairs. The struggle for the power and the glory was a struggle between men. The exclusion of women from the arena stood to reason, and this matter of course was legitimated by the use of old divine truths confirming women to be subordinate to men, and by laws and regulations laying it down that women politically and legally were not, and could never be, real citizens. Thus, the modern meritocratic discourse about social justice presupposed and built on gender relations characteristic of the premodern society. However, it should be noted that the first inroads into the male educational monopoly had been made as universities and a few colleges had opened up for women. In the second half of the 19th century women were also granted some citizen's right; for example, unmarried women could reach majority, and women also got the right to state positions on the intermediate level in post offices, elementary schools etc.

Thus, according to the rhetoric the grammar school was open to every talented boy, but there were also statements revealing the socially excluding nature of the system. In the 1870s the local fees for grammar school studies were raised, and furthermore state fees were also introduced. The arguments used for this decision was not very consistent with the meritocratic ideology: "Grammar school education is for the own good of those who attend this school. Therefore, it is only fair that they should also share the costs of their privileges."[13]

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[11]Florin, Christina & Johansson, Ulla (1993). *"Där de härliga lagrarna gro ... " Kultur, klass och kön i de svenska läroverken 1950-1914*, chapt 4-5.

[12]*Betänkande af Comiten för öfverseende af Rikets Allmänna Undervisningsverk den 29 December 1828* (1829), p 25.

[13]C G Hammarskold, the minister of ecclesiastical and educational affairs. Cited in *Läroverkskomiténs underdåniga utlåtande och förslag angående organisationen av rikets allmänna läroverk* (1884), p 301.

A modern meritocratic discourse was thus established, but it was mixed with premodern themes of religious doctrines in order to legitimate that the meritocracy was a preserve for bourgeois men. However, also themes from modern medical discourses echoed, according to which the female biology disqualified women for great intellectual achievements and, what was worse, would deem them to succumb if they dared to compete with men on the labour market.[14] Social Darwinistic theories could also be used in order to prove that the worker's son would meet a similar fate in such a competition.

However, at the end of the century such discursive themes started to break up. They were used to legitimate the social order, but many social democrats, liberals and elementary school teachers now criticized the system for being socially unjust. They called attention to the injustice of society providing different educations for different social classes, and of secondary education being free for boys but not for girls. The remedy was a comprehensive co-educational elementary school for all Swedish children up to the age of twelve. In 1918 Värner Rydén, Minister of Educational and Ecclesiastical affairs in the social democratic government, appointed a commission to create a democratic education system. In order to keep up with the competition with other countries on the world market, the nation had to take care of and develop all its talents. The interests of the nation was thus as earlier compatible with the meritocratic ideology, but the need for more effective brain hunting had seemingly increased.

After a lot of political compromises and manoeuvring, the school reform of 1927 was implemented, with two main consequences. Firstly, the grammar schools were opened to girls, and secondly, it was decided that a so-called "double connection" would be established, with the grammar schools continuing on from the fourth or sixth classes of the compulsory elementary school. The government would no longer subsidise other forms of education corresponding to the first four classes of the elementary school. The latter thus acquired the character of a four-year comprehensive school, with the aim of broadening the social base of the grammar schools. As a consequence, grammar school education actually became less exclusive.[15]

This is an indication that the discourses and discursive practices that established and defined the category of *the normal grammar school* student had changed, and consequently new meanings were attached to this category. In the next section I will analyse how those meanings were constructed in the grammar school teachers' discourse and in the rules and regulations guiding the daily life in school. The analysis is mainly carried out on two levels, firstly the normative level (rules, doctrines cultural norms) and secondly the symbolic level, where my aim is to deconstruct the symbolic meanings attached to the *normal grammar school student*. I will also touch upon the institutional level by examining if there were any mechanisms of exclusion built into the institution/organization itself[16].

My analysis is chiefly based on a systematic review of the publication *Tidning för Sveriges lärowerk* (TFSL), an organ of the grammar school teachers' union, covering the

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[14] Johannisson, Karin (1994) *Den morka kontinenten. Kvinnan, biologin och fin-de-siecle.*

[15] Ca 25 per cent attended grammar school in the 50s, even if four out of five of those students did not get as far as to the matriculation. Cf Statistiska centralbyrån (1984). *Pupils in Secondary Schools in Sweden 1864-1970*, p. 69.

[16] This analysis is partly inspired by Joan W Scotts model for the analysis of the social construction of gender. Her model encompasses four different analytical levels, e g the normative level, the symbolic level, the institutional level and the subjective level. Cf Scott, Joan W. (1989) *Gender and the Politics of History.*

period 1927-1960.[17]

THE PRIMACY OF TALENT

Figure 2 is an illustration of how the category of the normal grammar school student was constructed. Various mechanisms operated both on the normative, symbolic and institutional level in order to guarantee that the normal grammar school student belonged to the category of the talented few. Most important on the normative level was of course the meritocratic ideology. In 1927 echoes from the 19th century clearly resounded in the TSFL:

> *I often say to my students, that there is only one institution in Sweden where money and a distinguished name are of no avail, but where everyone is judged according to their abilities. That institution is a Swedish grammar school.*[18]

The school system had thus always been socially just, and therefore the school reform of 1927 both literally and figuratively kicked in doors that were already open. However, there was no consensus on how the line between gifted or less gifted students was to be drawn. Nor, of course, were there any objective and historically unchanging criteria to go by; instead, to use Foucault's words, the "regime of truth" prevailed here dictated by sciences like psychometrics. At the beginning of the period in question, talent was considered a rare item, a view which also legitimized the exclusivity of the grammar schools. In the 1940s, it was claimed that only 12.5 per cent of the population were capable of taking the matriculation.[19]

On the institutional level the ideology of meritocracy was manifested in school routines and practices. Testing and marking were procedures that left many students in no doubt that they were not gifted enough. Thereby they became marginalised, excluded, and transferred to the category of the others. Other excluding forms of practices were study counselling and the redirecting of failing students to vocational programs. On the normative level there were also strict rules for how to treat failing students. After having failed the yearly exam not only once but a second time the student was expelled.

Many symbolic meanings served as excluding mechanisms. Mediocre students should be prevented from access; at least alliterates should be stopped from getting in. Voices were raised in warning against the old womanish namby pamby pedagogy which would turn grammar school into democratic nursing homes for less able students.

The normal grammar school student in a class perspective

The category of the normal grammar school student was thus supposed to include the most talented part of the Swedish youth. But if we apply a class perspective, we can see how several mechanisms operated to exclude certain groups of students, regardless of how gifted they might have been. On the institutional level the very organisation of schooling was to the disadvantages for young people of rural origin. Grammar schools were situated only in larger towns, and even if the so called double connection aimed at facilitating for students from the country to attend a grammar school, these students were under represented in grammar school.

On the normative level stipulations that the student had to pay various fees had not been abolished. Consequently poor students faced difficulties in financing their

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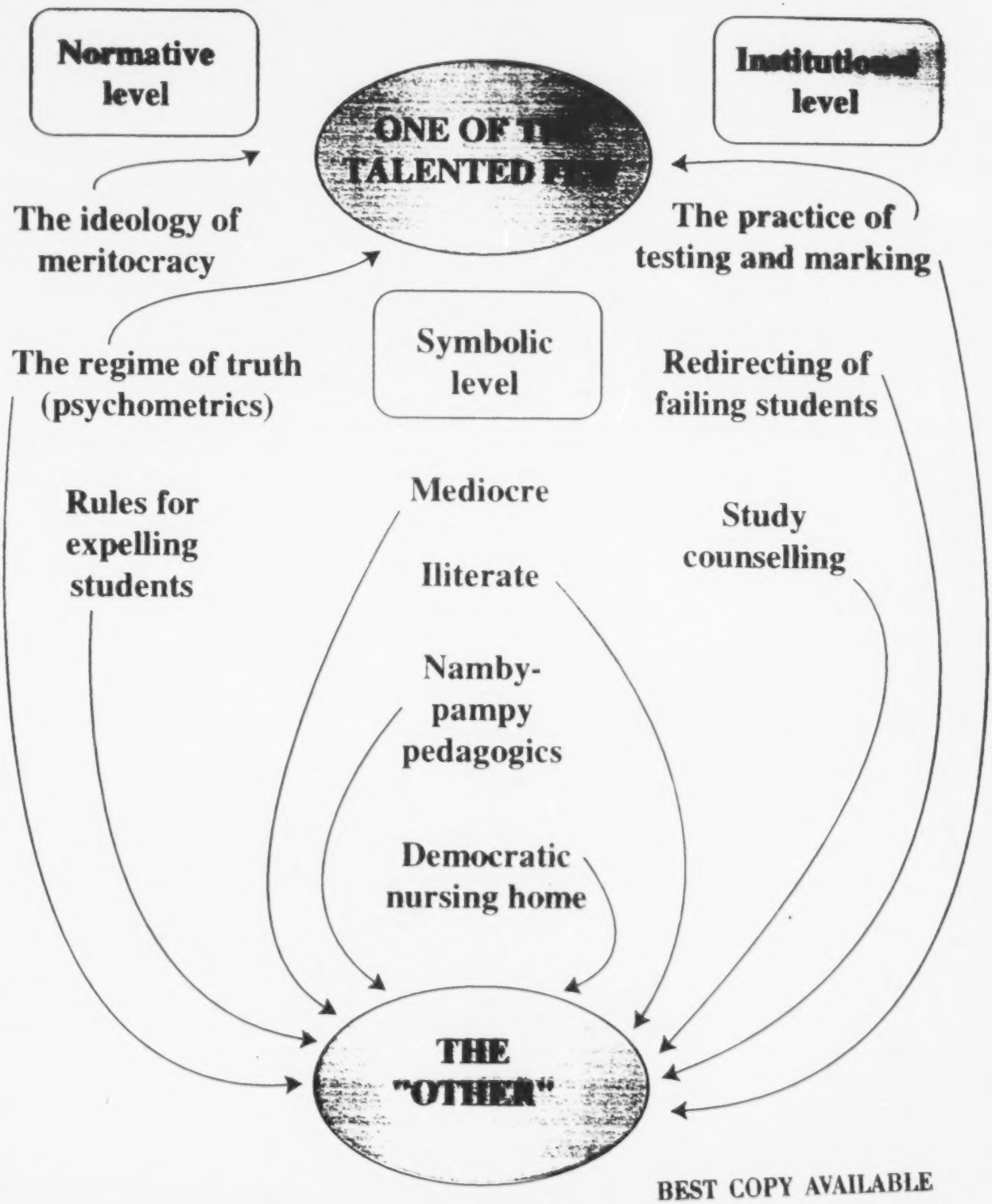
[17] Approximately 900 issues in all

[18] G. Bjorklund, quoted in TFSL, no. 9, 1927, p. 145

[19] TFSL, no. 6, 1945, p. 99, report of a discussion held by the Association of Young Swedish Grammar School Teachers

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE NORMAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL STUDENT



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education, even if it was still possible to be exempted from these fees or to get a scholarship. But for a scholarship it was necessary for the student to behave well. If he or she did not get the highest mark in order and conduct, the scholarship was usually withdrawn.

The category of the "normal grammar school student" was also given symbolic meanings which implicitly excluded working class kids. The child of university graduates was occasionally depicted as the ideal grammar school student, an image which was supported on the normative level by the theses of eugenics:

> *An erudite man ought reasonably to have a greater predisposition towards raising erudite children than businessmen, farmers and workers do. A cat gives birth to a cat, and a rat to rats, that is the law of nature.*[20]

Obviously, strong cultural norms prescribed that the cobbler should stick to his last! Many symbolic meanings were attached to working class students which implicitly defined them as belonging to the others. For example, working-class parents were at times depicted as obsessed with learning and status. There was a "superstitious belief in the value of theoretical studies, characteristic of our people and quite predominant among the lower levels of society".[21] But the most powerful metaphor was that of the spectre of the learned proletariat, symbolised by the working class student:

> *Moreover, it would be a disaster in the making should large numbers of working-class boys and girls go in for a university career. They do not have parents who can support them in case of unemployment. There is no point in the state throwing away millions of crowns to create such a situation.*[22]

The normal grammar school student in a gender perspective

A similar analysis may also be carried out in a gender perspective. On the institutional level it is important to note that gender segregation still remained within the school system. For example, the very existence of girls' schools with a gender specific curriculum, was an attempt to divert girls from higher studies, to hinder "yet another unwelcome suction of girls into the state grammar schools." In some towns girls did not have access to the lower secondary school. There they were restricted to the girls' school of the town, which meant that they had to take private lessons in order to proceed to the upper secondary school for the matriculation.

On the normative level certain political doctrines worked as means of inclusion. For example, education was declared a citizen's right, and women were now politically and legally defined as full citizens.[23] Rules for scholarship were changed in order to include also girls.[24] But at the same time there were strong cultural norms prescribing that the women's place was at home.

The practice of testing seems to have been to the advantage of girls, as girls were said to perform better than boys at tests and exams. On the other hand, the talented grammar school student was symbolically constructed in such ways that girls were excluded. The female student was pictured as a symbol of a far too ambitious student, a busy Lizzie, risking her health by studying too hard. In short, the conscientious, careful

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[20]Svenonius, TFSL, no. 27, 1932, p. 365.

[21]TFSL, no. 20, 1931, p. 261.

[22]Cederschiold, quoted in TFSL, no. 4, 1927, p. 57.

[23]However, as Hildur Ve argues in herpaper for this symposium, the meaning of citizenship was still gendered in a way that in certain respect excluded women. Cf Ve, Hildur (1998) Education, social justice, individualization and citizenship rights.

[24]Many of the scholarships were stipulated by private donators, for poor but talented **boys,** but the state made it possible to change the stipulations to include also girls.

young woman did not match the ideal of the normal grammar school student. Instead, the ideal would seem to be a boy who, by exhibiting a manly indolence in the first few years of grammar school, demonstrated an "ability to conserve his energy for future work".[25]

But the arguments were surprisingly inconsistent. Young women were good at school, but they were not good in the right way. The same person who warned that a diligent girl ran the risk of overexerting herself could also worry that "the temptation of the excessively many opportunities for dancing . . . will be too much for some girls".[26] Grammar school studies made the girls too good for housework, but they also became overworked because they - unlike the boys - had to help out at home as well, which was nonetheless "wholly beneficial" for them.[27] No matter what the girls did, it seems, it was always the same old story...

The normal grammar school student redefined

These opinions were frequent in the TSFL before WWII. But from the mid 1940s on, new meanings were attached to the category of the normal grammar school student which made it less exclusive. For example under the heading "Dinosaur in the Parliament" a member of the Swedish Parliament was criticised in an editorial for saying that those who could not afford to study ought instead to dig ditches.[28] Previously, arguments taken, say, from racial biology had been used to shut working class children out, but now it could instead be claimed that social mobility helped improve the quality of the upper class.[29] It was the duty of society to give each and every one the education he or she demanded. The claim was even made that it was up to the parents - not the teachers - to decide whether their children were gifted or not.

The issue of gender disappeared completely from the debate. One explanation for this may be that girls proved themselves worthy of inclusion. Another explanation could be that it had become evident that the fact that girls were entitled to grammar school education did not seriously threaten the gender power system, since other mechanisms worked to ensure the male hegemony.[30] Another reason for the redefinition of the normal grammar school student may also be that historical and social conditions had changed and thus made new discursive formations possible. How, then, is it possible to understand, in the spirit of Foucault, the ruptures and conjunctures of various discursive themes, and the breaks in social practices and symbolic meanings that contributed to the redefinition of the normal grammar school student? These questions will be dealt with in the final section.

A field in transition

The construction of a school system in the 19th century paved the way for the emergence of a pedagogical field, i g a social field in Bourdieu's sense of the word. Different groups of teachers, politicians and researchers became involved in the struggle over the field's values. Thereby they used the discursive themes concerning access to grammar school studies as social strategies. These themes can, according to Ingólfur Jóhannesson, be grouped around a few legitimating principles, which have in previous struggles acquired

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[25]Report of a discussion held by the Stockholm Teachers' Society, TFSL, no. 20, 1941, p. 307.
[26]TFSL, no. 4, 1927, p. 59.
[27]School doctor, as reported in TFSL, no. 17, 1932, p. 223.
[28]TSFL, no. 1, 1955, pp. 3-4.
[29]Prof. Dahlberg, as reported in TFSL, no. 4, 1942, p. 62.
[30]One such mechanism is dealt with in the paper presented at this symposium by Britt-Marie Berge. Cf Berge, Britt-Marie (1998) The maternal nurturance trap. Discursive Practices of "Social justice" in Gender Equity Pedagogy in a Swedish Compulsory School

symbolic capital and thereby been active in structuring the discourse of the field.[31]

As has been shown two legitimating principles can be distinguished among the discursive themes dealing with access to grammar school studies; firstly the principle of social justice and secondly the principle of social efficiency. The principle of social justice was articulated within the distributive paradigm, e g it was restricted to the morally proper distribution of benefits among the members of the society.[32] In accordance with this paradigm, equal access to grammar school education was of vital importance. However, the idea was not that everyone should attend a grammar school. The meritocratic theme was also in play legitimating a restricted access: grammar school was only for gifted students. From this point of view it was necessary that the selection of students was just, and according to many 19th-century teachers and politicians this was also the case. "Proofs" were provided by religious doctrines and scientific findings that legitimated the exclusion of working class children and girls.

The school reform of 1927, however, is an indication that such truths were seriously challenged, but still many of the teachers adhered to them. The argument was that talent was a rare item, and therefore it was only neat and right that the vast majority of the Swedish youth were excluded. The gendered and socially biased selection was legitimated with reference to eugenics and psychological and biological theories of girls' ineligibility for higher education.

The principle of social efficiency was also mobilized in order to defend a restricted access. It would be a disaster for the nation if women to a large extent entered the labour market, competing with men and, worse still, even winning that competition! In the interest of the nation the woman should first and foremost perform her natural role in life as a wife and mother. The spectre of the learned proletariat was also a social reality in the 1930s and, from the teachers' point of view, much could be won by keeping the grammar school doors locked against the masses. The issue at stake was to keep exlusive the cultural capital institutionalized in grammar school. This was more or less explicitly regarded as necessary for the possibilities of converting the cultural capital into high salaries and status on the labour market. However, after the end of the Second World War the demand for professionals grew, at the same time that qualification requirements were stiffened for many occupational groups.[33] The spectre of the educated proletariat faded in a world where even "a cow owner nowadays has to know how to run a milking machine, judge the fatty content of the milk and know what is needed to increase it"[34]

At that moment new themes were articulated in the teachers' discourse and a different strategy was employed in the struggle over the field. The teachers would no longer educate only a very restricted elite. They would now - still in the spirit of human capital theory - attempt to guide the largest possible percentage of Swedish youth to the highest possible level of education. As dutiful servants of the industrial state, the teachers would happily try their best to rise the qualification level of the nation. This in itself was quite compatible with the older ideology enshrining the primacy of talent - the best would still be those who got the farthest.

This strategical shift was also "natural" from another point of view. The entire field

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[31]In his investigation of school reforms in Iceland, Johannesson has combined Foucault's genealogical method for discourse analysis with Bourdieu's concept of capital and social field. See Johannesson, Ingólfur (1998) Genalogy and Progressive Politics: Reflections on the Notion of Usefulness, pp. 297-315. I want to express my gratitude to Johannesson for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I will draw on his ideas in my analysis of the discursive shifts that I have identified in the teachers' discourse.

[32]Young, Iris Marion (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, pp. 15ff.

[33]Ohlsson, *Högre utbildning och demografisk förändring*, pp. 57ff, p. 209.

[34]Editorial, TFSL, no. 17, 1947, pp. 241 ff.

of education was being restructured during this time. It was obvious that the period of compulsory school attendance was going to be lengthened, and the elementary school teachers now began seriously to get involved in the battle over the field's values. As a result, the old foe of the grammar school teachers, the educated proletariat, was replaced by elementary school teachers who "hanker after our positions, titles and imaginary perquisites".[35] The battle mainly concerned the right to teach at the lower secondary level, which is why the editorial column of the TFSL advocated an early differentiation of the students within the walls of the future comprehensive school and not, as before, at the portals of the junior grammar school. This shift illustrates how, in the words of Bourdieu, social strategies are generated by endless acts of recognition resulting in investments in the collective enterprise of creating symbolic capital. Even if the acts of recognition also generate a misrecognition of what the struggle concerns, they are anyway practical calculations that people make on the basis of a sense of which kind of strategies will be successful.[36] This may be an explanation why the discursive themes changed in the TSFL without anyone noticing or commenting the shift.

Finally I will return to Foucault's deep regimes of truth. What could or could not be said was also determined by the power relations structuring the economical, political and ideological field. In the 19th century powerful bourgeois groups were successful in claiming that the bourgeois meritocracy and education system was socially just. Later on the labour movement and the social democrats challenged the bourgeois hegemony in many spheres of society, and after WWII the Social Democrats came into power.[37] And the dominant theme was now that the social order and school system was not socially just. Such statements became the truths of the new time. Many investigations of the social recruitment to higher education had been carried through, and they showed the socially biased nature of the system.[38] The notion of the reserve of talent also constituted a powerful discourse, and much research was done in order to measure its proportions. The conclusion was that the proportion of the population, capable of taking the matriculation, ought to be doubled in size compared to earlier estimations.[39]

Furthermore, the discursive themes which predominated in the TFSL during the 30s were related to conservative doctrines, which, by the end of the Second World War, had lost much of their credibility. That meant for example that truths provided by eugenics could not possibly be voiced any longer. When in addition the political decision-makers, i.e. the social democrats, explicitly assigned the school an important role in realising their visions of the good society, the grammar school teachers could not afford to miss the train. However, on board this train, the struggle over the field is still going on. All over the world there is a revival of old legitimating themes of talent and social efficiency.[40] Hopefully Foucault can help us to understand also while the wheel has seemingly come full circle.

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[36]Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) *The Logic of Practice*, p 68f.

[37]Between 1933 and 1945 they had also constituted the government but together with other political parties.

[38]Moberg, Sven (1951) *Vem blev student och vad blev studenten?*. Statens offentliga utredningar (1936) *De svenska universitets- och högskolestudenternas sociala och ekonomiska förhållanden.*

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